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Four Days of God



Harriet Prescott Spofford



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Four Days of God





Four Days of God

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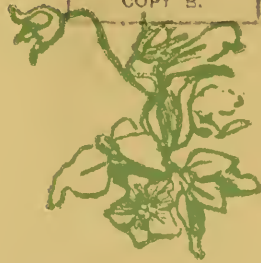


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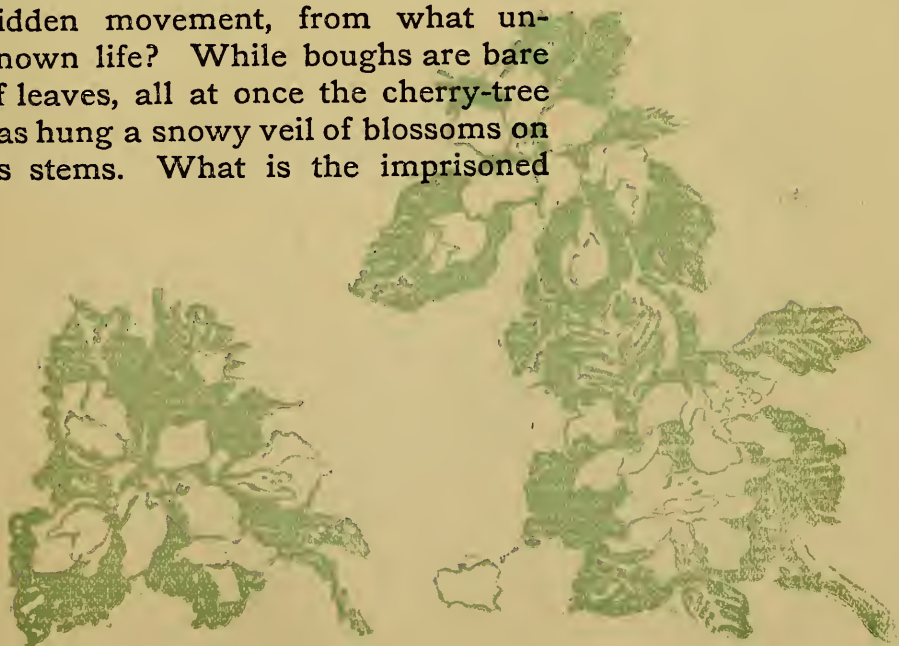
For Lo, the Winter is Past





For No, the Winter is Past

LOOKING at it merely as a thing of wonder, among all miracles there is no greater than the coming of the spring. The earth was so brown and bare and hard,—slowly a mist swathes it, the suspicion of a tender green, and everywhere the grass is growing, everywhere as if each particle of sand and soil were aspiring to a higher form of being. This stem was yesterday like a dead coral branch, to-day a tiny red sprout has parted the wood. Whence comes it, what is it, by what hidden movement, from what unknown life? While boughs are bare of leaves, all at once the cherry-tree has hung a snowy veil of blossoms on its stems. What is the imprisoned



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mystery? Then the friendly dandelion hastens to scatter its gold, down in the swamps the arum makes a green fire, and the maples flush in clouds where hints of scarlet are lost in russet; everywhere sapphire is melting into emerald, the willows make a sunshine of their own, a veil of filmy grey blends all together in a dream of tender color, and suddenly thickets and vines and lofty trees are waving verdure clad against the velvet blue.

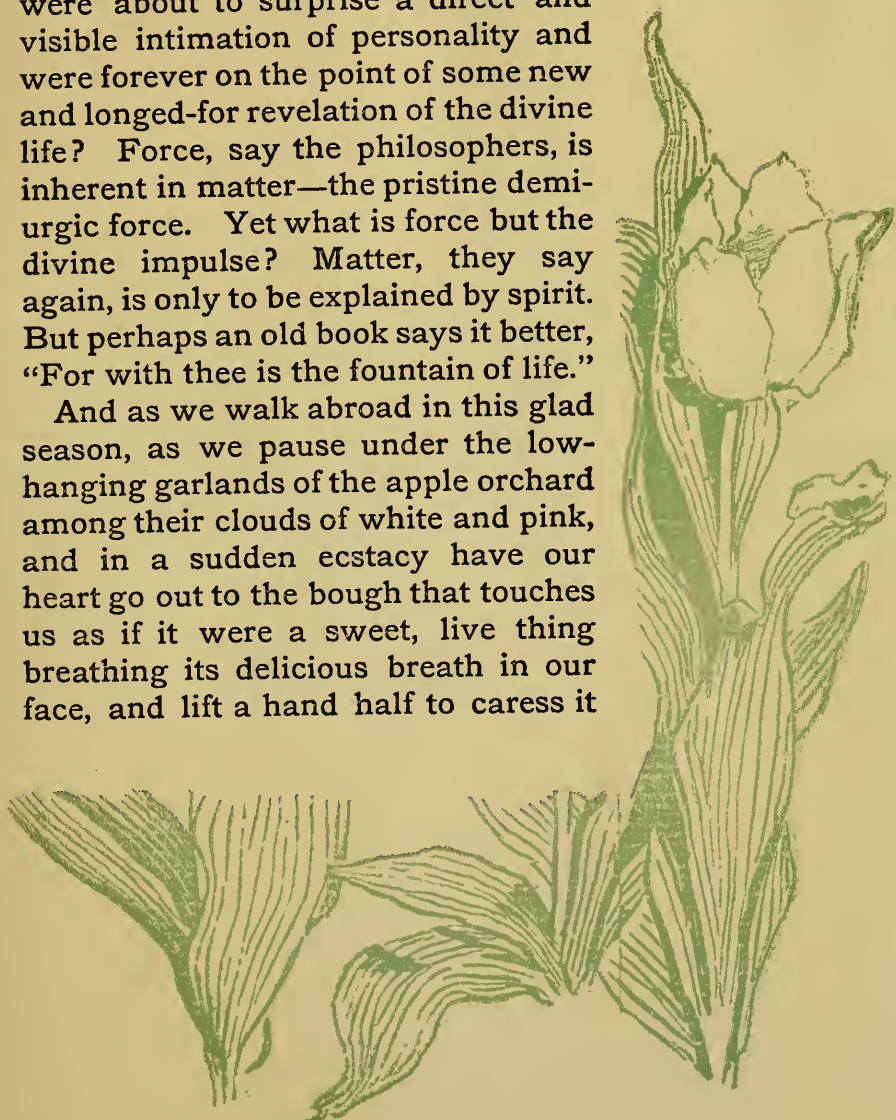
And what has done it? Science may explain the whole phenomena in two or three sentences. But when all is said, has anything been told? By whatever process, through whatever steps, by whatever agents, is it anything we have seen but the vivid manifestation of creative force pulsating through the planet, springing to light, to blade and leaf and flower? In that



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warm, swift beating of vital flame on flame does it not seem as though we were about to surprise a direct and visible intimation of personality and were forever on the point of some new and longed-for revelation of the divine life? Force, say the philosophers, is inherent in matter—the pristine demi-urgic force. Yet what is force but the divine impulse? Matter, they say again, is only to be explained by spirit. But perhaps an old book says it better, “For with thee is the fountain of life.”

And as we walk abroad in this glad season, as we pause under the low-hanging garlands of the apple orchard among their clouds of white and pink, and in a sudden ecstasy have our heart go out to the bough that touches us as if it were a sweet, live thing breathing its delicious breath in our face, and lift a hand half to caress it



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before we think; as we stoop where the dark blue violets seem to hold another rendering of what the midnight heavens partly reveal and partly hide; as we hear the brooks run; and catch the warble on the wing; we feel this fountain of life flowing through all things, the very life of God Himself.

And if the trees of the Lord are full of sap, are we ourselves less subject to the heavenly influence? Flammarion has imagined that as in the thin atmosphere of Mars wings may have got the start of the majestic world and the intelligent being may be the winged being there, so in other worlds the vegetable existence may be the conscious and intelligent existence. But that is not the case here, at any rate, and surely we must be as sentient of the divine touch as the brown furrow is, as the flowers escaping from it are



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—we who have escaped so much further. The dust of the earth, the stock, the stone, the stem, shall not feel this great pulsation and the boon be denied to us.

And is it not a fact that in every healthy being there comes a feeling of buoyancy with the spring, an added sense of power, of the fullness of life, an increase of purpose, that song thrills along a stronger string for the poet, that praise wells from the heart of the worshipper, as at no other period of the round year, that it is a time of great beginnings? In winter the whiteness of the world, the sparkle of the stars, may lead the thought upward; but in the month of May, when all else springs, the thought springs higher and higher from nothing that we see, from nothing we imagine, but from a source beyond our understand-



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ing, from the unseen, the unknown, the beloved, the fountain of life. It is high tide, too, in us. We recognize in the hope and the happiness of the hour that the Lord of life is also the Lord of love, and that love is throbbing through the universe like its pulse.

Are we then unconsciously and involuntarily nearer to God at one time than another? That can hardly be. Yet we, ourselves, may be more permeable to influence, more sensible of outer power, of indwelling spirit, in the time of the rushing, breaking, budding life. We may then gain the increment we use later. It is in the spring that they scatter the rice abundantly upon the full-flowing Nile, to gather the harvest when the field has emerged from the flood, having cast their bread upon the waters to find it after many days.





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Surely there is no season when joy, the "mere joy of being," so bubbles over as now. And is the mere joy of being a thing to be despised? Not because being is the gift of God, but because it is the immanence of God, is God in us. For if touching the Almighty we cannot find Him out, yet we need not think it arrogance to feel our Father's life our life also; nor, so long as "the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars," a profanity to search, even though it be with simple fancies, into the secret places, conjecturing what that life so abundantly given means. "There is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets," said Belteshazzar; but perhaps only to those that seek for them. It may be they are hidden that we shall seek.

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As the muscle grows that is exercised, so does the soul that seeks into spiritual things. While we implore fellowship we may forget servility. The prophet who had very full and high vision says that when he prostrated himself abjectly the voice said, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

But it requires no more than a small and limited vision to see the tremendous revelation the spring always makes, as if some splendid certainty should compensate us for the unsolved mystery elsewhere—not in any broad lettering of written promise that the soul should live forever, but in the suggestions of all subtle analogy while the earth rolls up out of shadow and the year finds resurrection. From the small seed hidden in the blackness of death what white wonder of a flower



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is this that has come tremulously into the freer life of the outer air, bathed in the sunshine of the vaulted heaven? It is not the flower of last year come back again, but it is the individual of the plant continued in a larger, lovelier life, and it gives the dullest mind, the darkest doubter, a hint of the singleness of the soul, a prophecy of the reality of the risen spirit. "Art Thou not from everlasting?" sang he whom it is said an angel bore from Judea to Babylon on his Master's errand. Surely he felt the pristine impulse of Deity in him, carried over into eternity, an immortal possession. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? *We* shall not die!"





My Staff, Even Beauty

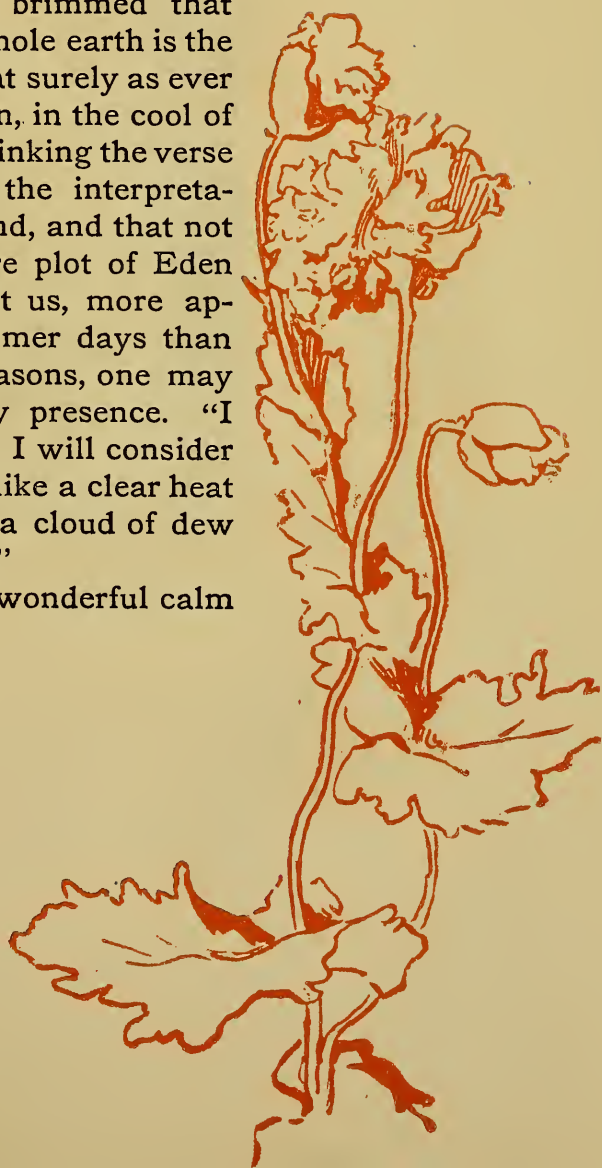




My Staff, Even Beauty

IT is when summer pauses at her height and the tides of life and loveliness are brimmed that one feels the whole earth is the Lord's garden, and that surely as ever he walks in his garden, in the cool of the day. Instead of thinking the verse a fable, one marvels the interpretation is not oftener found, and that not only in the four-square plot of Eden but everywhere about us, more apparently in these summer days than at other times and seasons, one may look for the heavenly presence. "I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

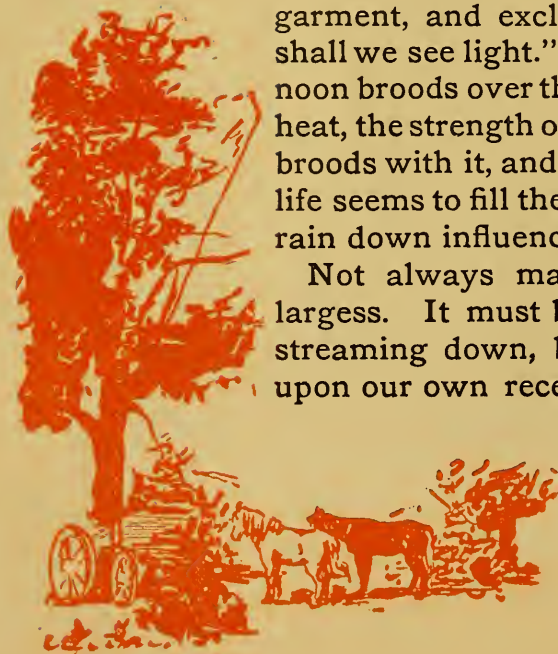
It is not only in the wonderful calm



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and hush of the deep summer morning, when all the world perhaps still sleeps, when grass and fences are drenched with dew sparkling into gems in the wind, when the morning star has lost itself in clearer luster, and rose and gold brighten into perfect light full of a great lonely sweetness, that one recognizes the being of him who covers himself with light as with a garment, and exclaims, "In thy light shall we see light." But when the high noon broods over the land with intense heat, the strength of the creative power broods with it, and a vivifying spirit of life seems to fill the whole heaven and rain down influence.

Not always may we receive this largess. It must be that it is always streaming down, but much depends upon our own receptivity. Absorbed

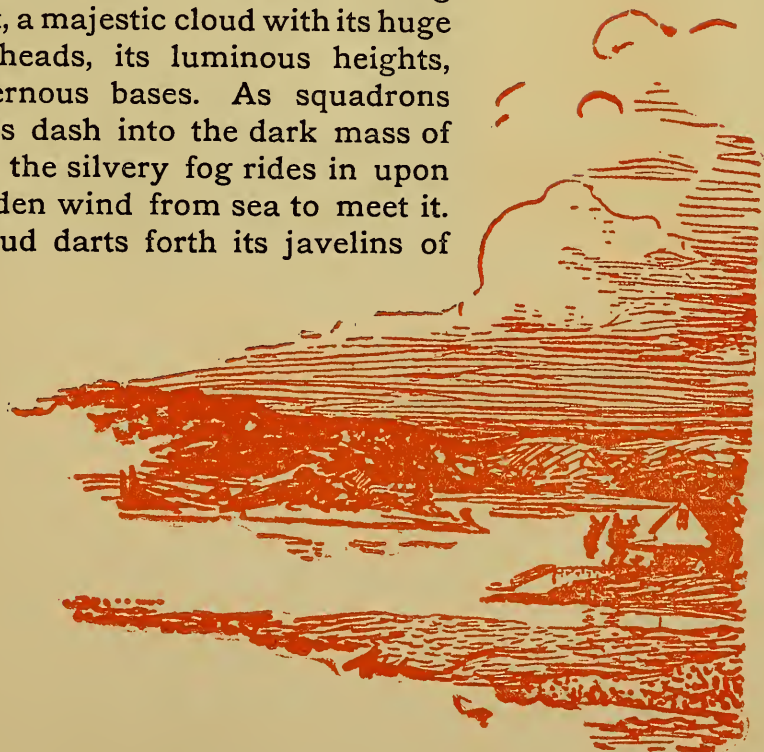


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by care or work or grief, our dull elements fail to respond, too weak, perhaps, to bear so great a flood. But once surrendered and abandoned to it, soaked through with this deific warmth, then we

Become a living soul,
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Against this splendor of azure and sunshine steams up the miasma of marsh and meadow and rolls along the west, a majestic cloud with its huge thunderheads, its luminous heights, its cavernous bases. As squadrons of lances dash into the dark mass of the foe, the silvery fog rides in upon the sudden wind from sea to meet it. The cloud darts forth its javelins of



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fire, the air is purple with ominous gloom, the livid lake doubles all the wild splendor, the thunder bowls from hollow to hollow of the cloud, echoes in far recesses of heaven and dies in wild and awful music. The winds pipe and the rains fall, and the battle of the elements is on, in great purifying process, burning and scathing its way through the ranks of evil. "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God." There must have been such a tempest among the Judean hills when the singer broke forth in the Ninety-third Psalm, which tradition says was appointed to be sung on the sixth day of the week, but which should have been, at any rate, the inspiration of some splendid thunder-storm rolling from peak to peak, where Hermon kept the outpost, or where Tabor waited for its glory.



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"Thy throne is established of old: thou art from ever-lasting," he cries, overwhelmed with the moment's sublimity.

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves," as the peals roll away and the rustle and roar of the rain re-echoes in the swelling torrents. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters."

It is might that sounds the keynote of the scene, the might and majesty of the old Hebrew days before it was known that love casteth out fear. How sweet is the air when the rain goes sobbing away, the wind withdraws to its deep-sea caves, the birds shake off showers of song, from everywhere balms and balsams, long breaths of perfume, wander about us, the sun sheds his benediction out of further depths! So some great convul-



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sion of pain or sorrow leaves us on a new earth under a new heaven. Now with what imperceptibly swift, warm touches the sunbeams fall upon us. Can it be that these inconceivably gentle throbs are the same electric potency that so short time since moved with a hemisphere of sound? Yet it is the right hand that is glorious in power that makes the bare rod bloom blossoms and yield almonds. This power has not such majesty and might that it cannot turn to one with love.

For out of the rain and up from the gust with what elastic strength the stem of the flower springs back and sheds its airy dew! As you glance at it, with a thrill of surprise you have a message from every spray, as if the still small voice—the voice singing in silence—spoke again after the whirl-



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wind and the thunder pass. You are wretched, it may be, with a hopeless depression; the world is so beautiful and you must leave it, or one dearer to you than your own being must go,—and in death there is no remembrance. To lose life, to lose personality, to lose those you love, in their identity and the potentiality of recognition! And, trying to overthrow the doubt, you have seemed to yourself so trivial, so unworthy—"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" What are you that you should dare to think of communion with the highest, the vast of loveliness and power? And then a weed that has come to blossoming unseen of the gardener catches your eye. How pure is its hue, what precision marks its shape, what perfection of design in its tiny cup! The gardener may despise it, but the power that set the stars





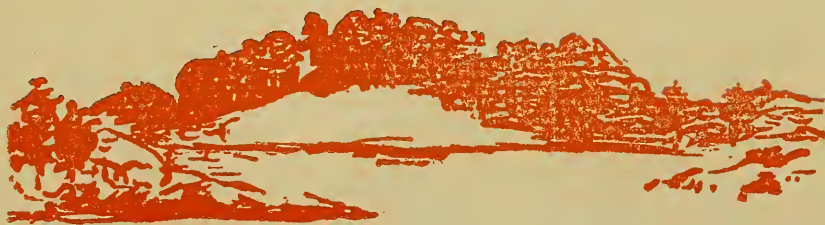
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rolling ordained for its petal that curve which might drop out of the lines of intersecting orbits, melted those tints together, and, since the flower was first born, has never failed to mark that petal with the two fine lines. And shall he waste love so upon a weed and have none left for you, aspiring, longing, suffering soul? You pluck the little flowering weed and look at it. Can the utmost grace known to art equal the purity of that line? What tissue made of man rivals the delicacy of this leaf? What far-reaching power is this that, through the dark and mold, brings the pearly marvel to life? What wisdom that never lets its seed develop into any other flower, that keeps its identity for it through death and decay and bursting into new life? And shall the weed have more honor with that power than has the

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soul of man? "Are ye not much better than they?"

The day declines; it is the enchanting hour before sunset; the long shadows are vivid as Dante's broken emeralds; the clarity of the air is like that of the heart of a chrysolite; but it is living, it is tender, as if there were a caress in it; the air bathes one like the warm waves of a soft sea. Going down the greensward, under the dark and ragged pines whose huge length and bowery tops have wrestled with a thousand storms, to the waterside, where the river flows out of its bay of myrtle green and gold and runs half in the shadow of the opposite wood, half in the lustrous sapphire and amethyst of a wasp's wing, suddenly the sense strikes you anew and more completely that here at your hand the Lord is walking in his garden in this



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cool of the day, not in dream or in fantasy or applied interpretation of the text, but in very truth. You are sensible of the divine nearness, your heart goes out in a throb of love and adoration to the unknown being beside you. And then "love betters what is best"; you are made aware that beauty can go no farther; that here is the utmost beauty can do; the hour, the scene, the light, the loveliness—all touch the outer edge of beauty beyond which neither its own fact nor your imagination can pass; that heaven itself to visual sense or the soul's perception can have no further beauty. Is it then that our power of appreciation is to be heightened in order to perceive a greater beauty in the realms of the life to come? Or is it that the uses of beauty belong to this world alone; we are to receive its fructifying and de-



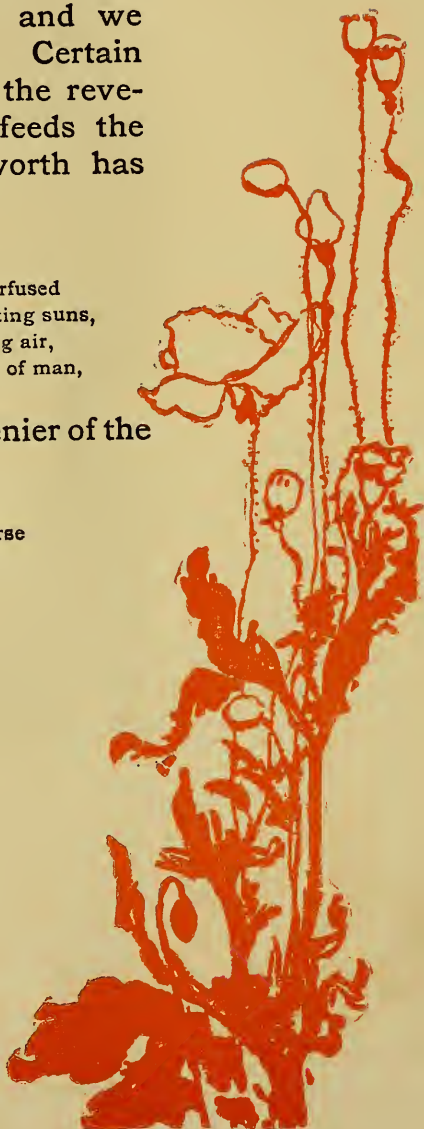
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veloping enrichment here, and that, in the life beyond, other things—things undreamed of—replace it, and we never have the same again? Certain it is that, to some, beauty is the revelation of divine being; it feeds the soul; it gives, as Wordsworth has said,

A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,

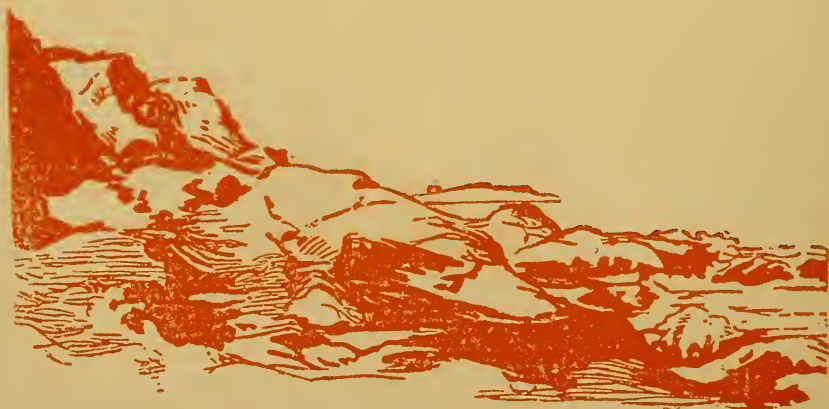
While Shelley, ethereal denier of the
ethereal, recognized in it

The mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.



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Perhaps we have called ourselves Pagans, refusing creeds, denying dogmas, one dogma only being ours ; that such as this is beauty—the melting jewels, the springing arch of the rainbow, the sunshine on billowy meadows, silver slipping of showers, curving reaches of river, the clear, cold moonlight on mid-ocean that swells the heart to breaking, the blue of distance, the purple warmth of mountain-sides, the long lines that carry the eye into the remote and unfathomable, the depth of azure in the horizon, where all the blue of multitudinous seas has crowded itself as this same day is crowded with deity. And in the profound of our being we feel the power of this beauty : it has been our joy and our consolation ; we have loved it, we have worshipped it ; it overflows, we see, with the spirit of the Lord, and,



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since "where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," in such an hour as this we find that all unconsciously we have been loving and worshipping God. Perhaps it is but a gleam of the smile of his face we see, perhaps but the skirt of his garment—our sight too poor, our point of view too small for more—but it is he! And it is they who love beauty and use it with merely sensual delight and to themselves alone, blind to its reach and meaning, who commit the sin against the Holy Ghost.

The day may draw down to its cool close with glowing west, with the music of lowing kine and bells over evening water, with puffs of perfume on the breeze bringing memories of we know not what, from we know not where, of ineffable tenderness, with a "sound of a going in the tops





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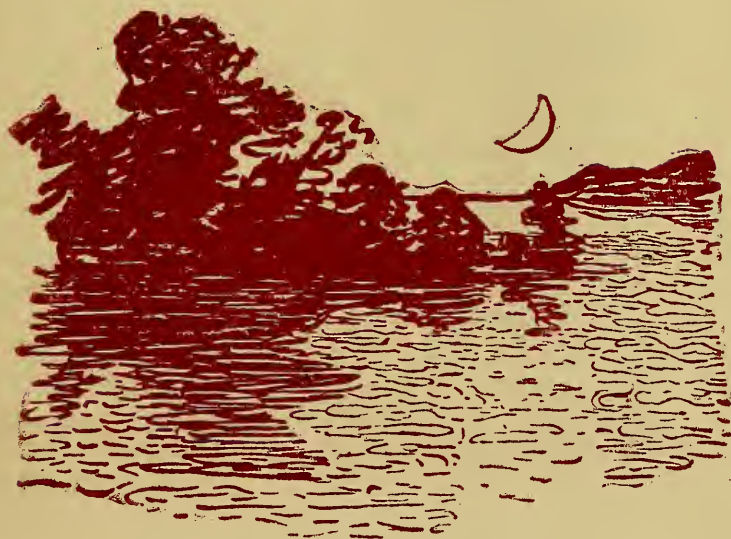
of the mulberry-trees," with that rich dusk which seems every moment about to open and let some splendor out, — and still it is our good moment. Another time we may be dull and blind as the clod again, but now we find ourselves skilled

To keep
Heights that the soul is competent to gain.

Still memory of the great sweet presence does not leave us, — though the head be filled with dew and the locks with the drops of the night. The red half moon, riding low and near, a friendly thing in the summer south, slips down the dark curve of the wood and disappears, its touch extinguished in the tide below, and the solemn heavens still glow and tingle with the divine force pulsing through them. For now in the height of summer is

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the very fullness of life, and till sleep falls upon us we are satisfied with consciousness of the fullness of him that filleth all in all.





A Forsaken Bough and an Uppermost Branch

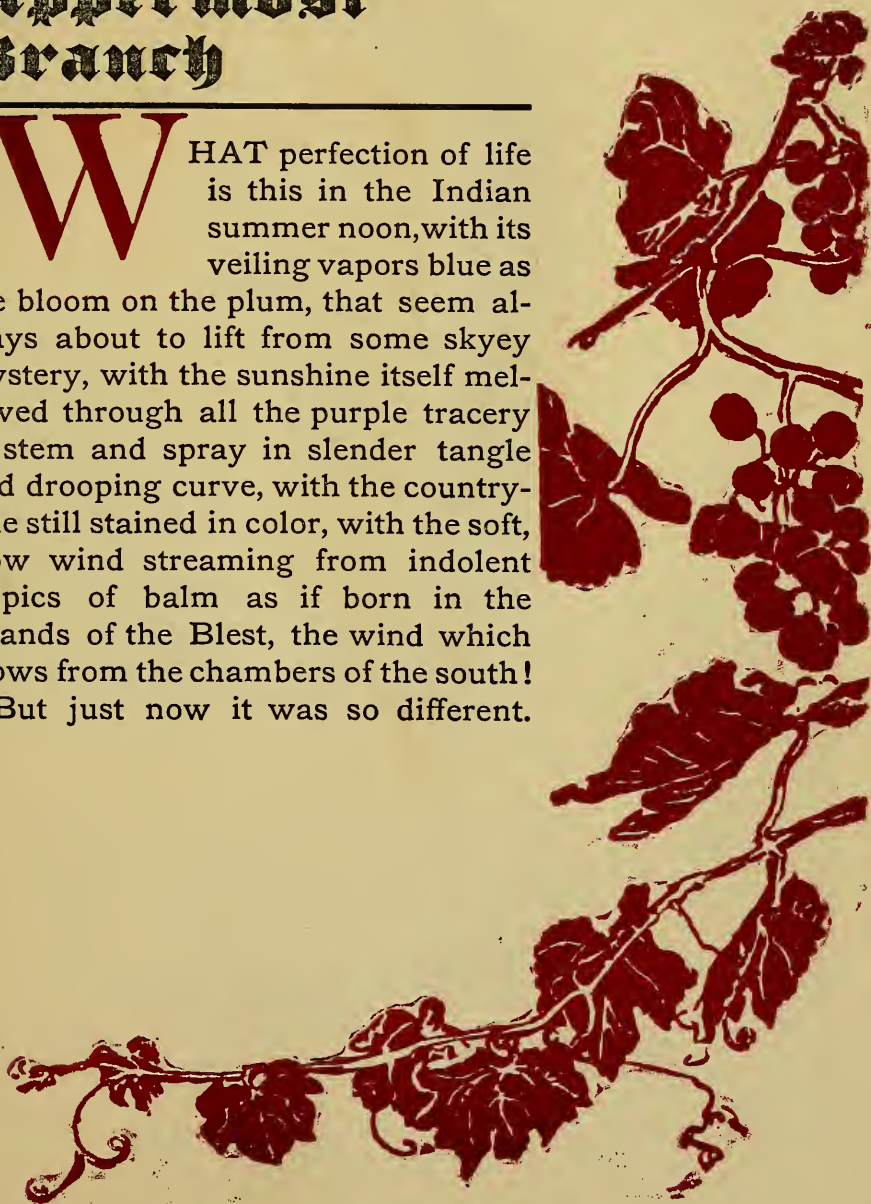




A Forsaken Bough and an Uppermost Branch

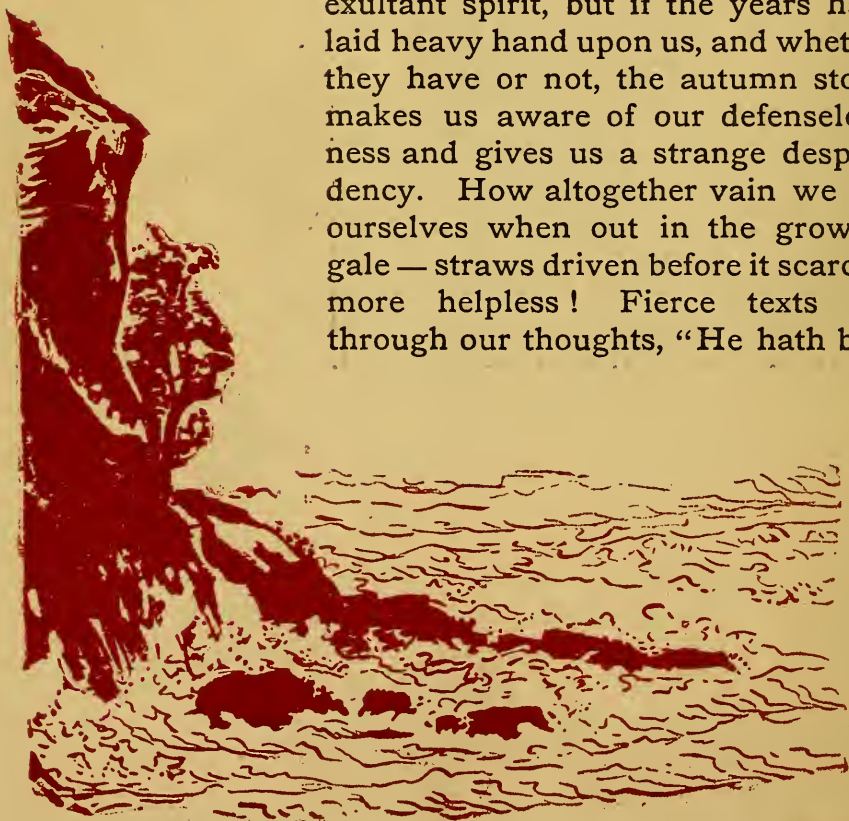
WHAT perfection of life is this in the Indian summer noon, with its veiling vapors blue as the bloom on the plum, that seem always about to lift from some skyey mystery, with the sunshine itself mellowed through all the purple tracery of stem and spray in slender tangle and drooping curve, with the countryside still stained in color, with the soft, slow wind streaming from indolent tropics of balm as if born in the Islands of the Blest, the wind which blows from the chambers of the south!

But just now it was so different.



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How dreary was the day, how impossible it was to send the thought beyond the gray and lowering sky, how unfriendly seemed all nature, what depression in the chill air and grim outlook, how sinister the night-fall! The wind whistled with storm upon its wings, it roared in the tree-tops, and sent the rote of the sea up like a thrilling note of despair. In the summer storm, when we are young and strong, we rise on it with exultant spirit, but if the years have laid heavy hand upon us, and whether they have or not, the autumn storm makes us aware of our defenselessness and gives us a strange despondency. How altogether vain we felt ourselves when out in the growing gale — straws driven before it scarcely more helpless! Fierce texts ran through our thoughts, "He hath bent



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his bow like an enemy." We saw, as twilight gathered, the earth without form and void, and when the wind mounted with wild screams we said, "He shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Wo unto us!" And in the night, as the house trembled, we thought of sailors driving on the coast, and we slept only by fits and starts and woke surprised, ashamed and full of as unreasonable joy to find the skies blue, the winds laid and the sunshine pouring in showers. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." As we look out and search what the Ptolemaists called the sapphire-crystalline, we understand something of the feeling the singer of the psalm of most wild melancholy and ardent imploration had. "Sing this,"



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he said, "to the tune of the Hind of Dawn."

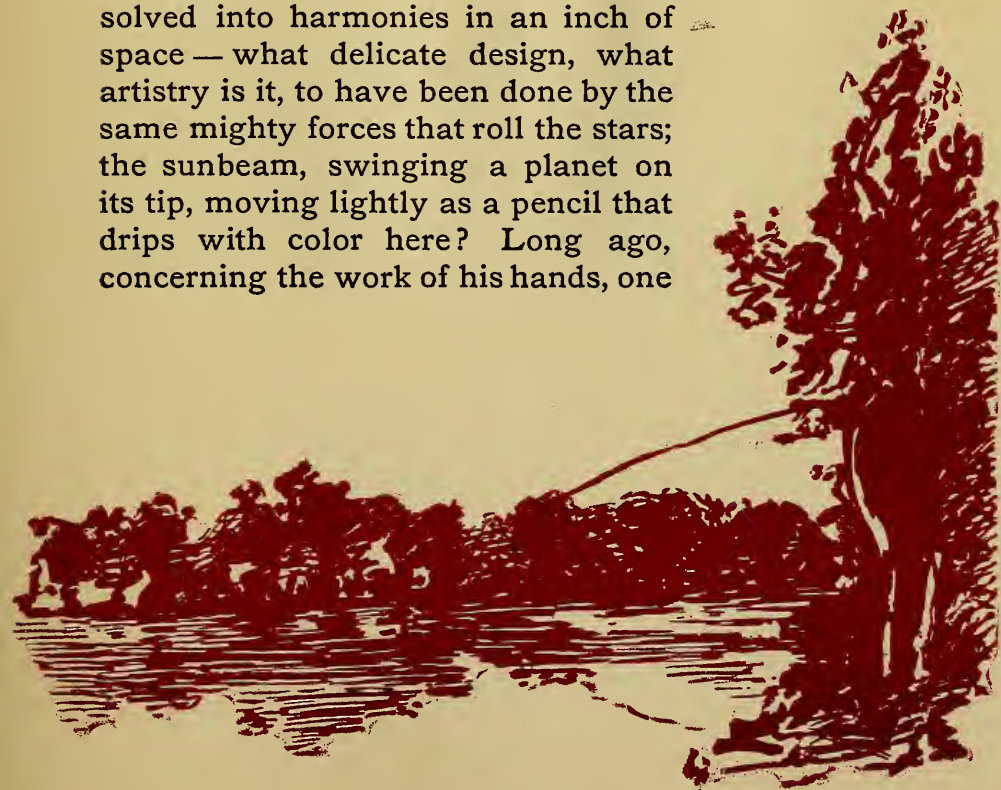
Come out then, this bright fall day into the nearer and thinner woods, the green moss underfoot overlaid with floating gold, the canopy above alive and gay with flickering points of light. Though it be noonday, the raindrops glitter on leaf and brier with the reflection of still purple ash and golden beech and scarlet maple, ruby and topaz and amethyst and beryl, — the treasure house the king built "for silver and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels" not so splendid as this bit of boscape of which the sun and wind are treasurers, and where none can turn the key upon us. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair



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colors and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Was it not well to have the gloom for the sake of the glory, the storm for the sake of the vast woodland peace? "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!"

What wonder is this that flutters into our hands—painted in all fine blending of tint, color-discords resolved into harmonies in an inch of space—what delicate design, what artistry is it, to have been done by the same mighty forces that roll the stars; the sunbeam, swinging a planet on its tip, moving lightly as a pencil that drips with color here? Long ago, concerning the work of his hands, one





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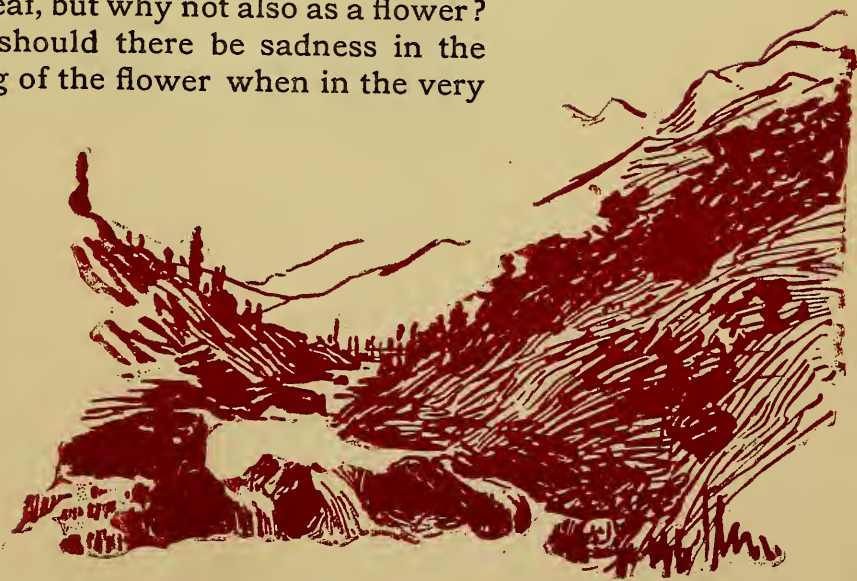
said, "I will also glorify them and they shall not be small." As the light sketches some prodigal artist tosses into the waste-basket are taken out by the peasant people with whom he stayed, and pinned against the wall, so, when we presently go back to play our part again in the life of the town — "thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city" — we will take this leaf and others with us to lay perhaps in the book we read,

To mark great places with due gratitude.

As we stand here and watch leaf after leaf drifting down, the thought has more than once assailed us that the race like the tree survives, but we like the leaf fall and are lost. We all do fade as a leaf, we sadly murmur. But as we look at this ripe thing lying

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on our palm, we also ripen as a leaf, we say, and drop at last in the death which is only another form of life, which is only new life set free. It is out of this setting free of new life, this change of the leaves from their substance, that the warmth let loose gives us this sweet Indian summer weather in which we walk abroad and fancy the day — with its pearly dawning, its rich noon life, its spicy afternoon fragrances, its early hazes that stretch an aerial barrier between us and the common place and island us in the ideal — is a day, not lost out of June, but hinting of a season lovelier yet than June, as if from the great body of death on earth were evolved the climate of the heavenly parallels. We all do fade as a leaf, but why not also as a flower? And should there be sadness in the fading of the flower when in the very



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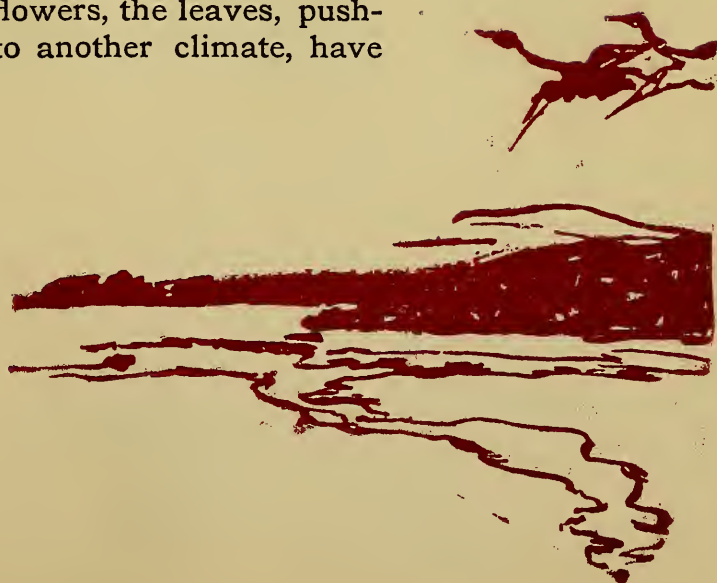
act of fading it leaves its seed, not its son, not its heir, but the concentration and essence of itself, the thing that shall return a rose and not a lily, a lily and not a violet, its principle of life, its perpetuity, its identity? "The flower fadeth because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." And the spirit of the Lord is the spirit of life.

But hark! We heard a little while ago as we stood, the honk of the wild geese flying over, distance softening their cry to a wilder, sweeter music than that of the huntsman's horn. And now what is this sudden rush and flutter of lesser wings? Look out over the open. What a whirlwind of flickering lines rises from the reeds of the wide marshes, what a myriad of winnowing wings, what life, what motion, what swinging together, what fanning apart, what a cloud of sparks

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and shadows, darkening the sky for a moment, now go soaring away into the sun! "A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." O birds flying south, what stirs you, what conducts you? How do you know, fledglings of a year, what happy fields may lie beyond? Into what skies do you penetrate; what life awaits you there? What hope, what buoyant certainty leads you along your path into heaven beyond heaven, and welcoming fields at last? St. Francis of Assisi called you "My brothers, the birds." How much more confidence in the hand that leads you have you than we who are not saints and do not often pause to call you our brothers! It is not you who are of little faith.

Even the flowers, the leaves, pushing forth into another climate, have





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more confidence than we. After all, may it be that the possibility of faith is a distinct faculty, and its habit, like that of any other faculty, is a thing to be cultivated, to be nourished, to be strengthened, not stimulated and fed into the overgrowth of superstition, but cared for and protected till strong and fine it reaches clear sunlight? Can it be that it is in its beginning purveyor of the food that feeds the very seed of the soul?

The afternoon wanes, the moon swims up clad in golden mists—the cold hunter's moon that has lasted over into the November days. It is but a little while since the harvest moon held the heavens, casting the blackness of the great trees, the tremulous shadows of the upper boughs, into dusky aisles of dreamland, filled with “the precious things put forth by



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the moon" — the warm and mellow moon, flooding the hollow of the sky with wonderlight, hanging overhead like some great brooding mother-bird, as if

An albatross asleep,
Balanced on her wings of light,
Hovered in the purple night.

But now this colder, whiter moon sails up the sky, drawing a woven veil of mists up with her from river and wood and field. All the world grows dim and weird and sad again. There is no tree, there is no rock; we are shut off, lost and alone in space; and all the sparkle of the fire upon the hearth, the warmth of dear human smiles and glances, the sound of singing and laughing voices cannot quite banish the spectre of the white gloom outside. Yet when, hours afterward, we look out from the window of our upper



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chamber, the mist has risen like the tide of a white sea and overtopped the breathing world, but far above in the clear transparence of depths of midnight blue moves the "faithful witness in heaven," splendid as an archangel's shield made of one jewel, an impersonate force of nature always pursuing its way above mists and darkness, serene and strong, with the poet's white fire laden indeed, but laden also with the promise of "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

And as we lift our eyes, and our soul seems interpenetrated with the glory of the upper and outer night, we almost seem ourselves to see the city that had "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it."



Now the King Sat in the Winter House






Now the King Sat in the Winter House

WHY should one un-
lessoned in creeds,
who looks on the chill
repose of death believe
in continued life? Why should one
bending over the loathly worm believe
in the winged fly? And why should
one in the power of the wintry world,
when the cold earth seems dead as the
dead shape lately hidden by its clods,
take courage for a future? Yet courage
merely means reliance upon power,
power to overcome, power to endure,
power to love and to be loved. And
is not true reliance based, consciously
or otherwise, upon the evidence of
things not seen, upon assurance of



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never failing fonts of strength, assurance that God lives in his world?



The Buddha, it is told, once met a man who, being born blind, had no conception of color. "Light?" he said, "Color? Radiant surfaces? It is all a dream. The rose has shape—I feel it. It has perfume,—I perceive it. But the tint of which you speak,—it is a superstition, an illusion!" The god went on his way. "Remain," he said, "in darkness, till you need light. Had you received hospitably the notion of something transcending your own powers, a new world had opened to you, and in the effort to bridge the space between you and that world wings would have grown on your soul!"

But see, through the chill air this wintry morning a fine frozen mist descends, a web of woven silver when a

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slant light touches it, hiding river and shore and field as much as if one were lost in some frozen nebula of the interstellar cold, could such thing be; and the thought comes involuntarily whether, were one wandering in the lonely spaces of realms unknown to this, would one then be less conscious, less observant, less a being still? A wind comes parting the veil of frozen gossamer and shredding it to ragged vapor—He bringeth the wind out of his treasures,—the sun bursts through and changes it to airy gold; there float up the river shores, all violet and tender fawns; there gloom the dark pines; carrying on its tide of fluent sapphire the snow-cruled glitter of its broken ice floes, sweeps the river far away into the rosy reaches of the east; and two great eagles come sailing down the wind. Surely if beauty be not the



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being of God himself, but is only the skirt of his garment, the Lord is passing down this way!

Nor is it all—this morning beauty—in the larger forces of the great tide, the solemn wood. See the frosty rime sparkling upon the parapet of the bridge, each crystal set in wrought-work of spun silver—And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? See where on every bough and spray the settling, freezing vapor has caught the sun and has become a spark of fire, and the air is atoss with live rubies and emeralds and topazes—He hath entered into the treasures of his snow—and the whole cold, dead world is glancing and quivering with life, while the shadow of every drift, the color in the heart of every rift of the ice, is the very blue of heaven.

But just beyond us the wood looms



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again. Here at the entrance the wind sings over the tree-tops like a careering spirit, but going farther all sound ceases. Save for the rare lifting of an iron bough the falling of a weight of snow, all seems the silence of death. But is it so? What streak of light was that darted up the tree bole with the chipmunk? Here is the print on the snow, one foot before the other in a single line, where the wary mink has passed; and how soft was this fluff of feathers that blundered with the startled owl across our faces! Down in the cedar swamp a flock of finches and jays and robins chuckle over the blue juniper berries; here the black and white woodpeckers swarm all about the boughs, clinging to the under side of the stems and quarrying for the hidden store within. But they are here as we are, animate beings, making



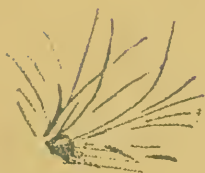


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the best of things. Listen, then—that tinkle, airy, remote, like a crystal bell in a dream—it is drop by drop of the living water of the little rivulet and it falls beneath the ice; and wherever it flows the chemic power of the life of the great planet flows with it—

Put like fire from off thy finger.

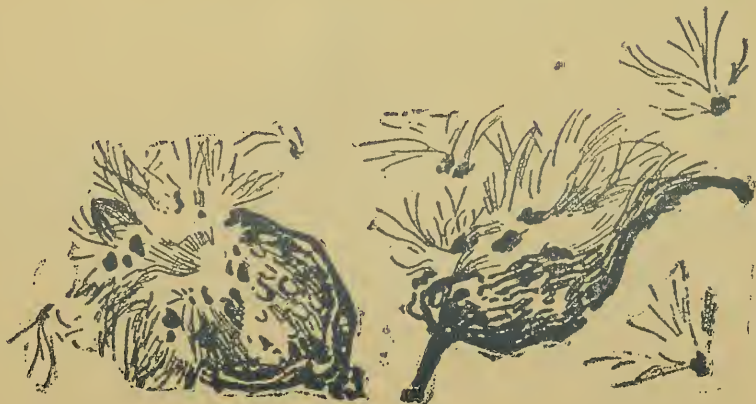
Here a dead leaf floats by us; its work is done, but something pushed it from its place, the thrill within the new bud there. The breath of the wind steals in now over this open glade and rifles the silky milkweed pod of its seeds, seeds where the life lies suspended, as it may sleep in the Oriental mage who has himself buried in the earth for a month or a year to be taken back some day to life and light again. Here is a chrysalis glued to a stem; it holds in its long sleep not the



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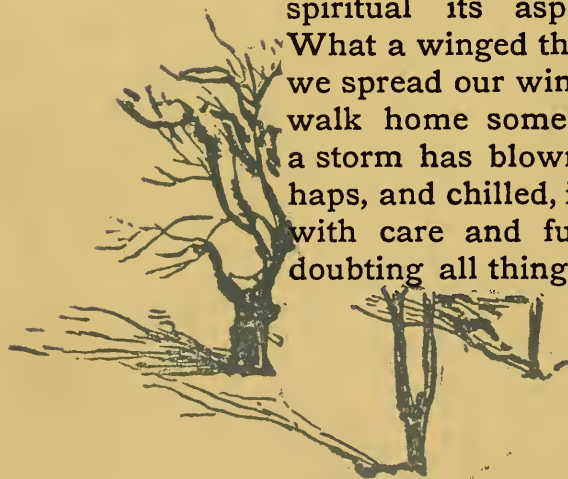
developing creature, but the folded, finished thing absorbing what it needs of the old body as the soul absorbs the issues of this life. See how vivid with their crimson juices are the stems of the wild roses, as we come out again; down there at the foot of the field, where a flight of crows go cawing and flapping home, the willow boughs are like green and golden flames. A cold and dead and frozen world? No, it is full of warmth and cheer and motion. The principle of life is never absent from it; even were it slumbering it is there, ready to wake. Everywhere throughout the apparent dark and cold is warmth and light—if we seek it. Everywhere, the vision growing strong and clear in the outlook, is the Creator and Preserver to be found.

But the wind comes from the sea;



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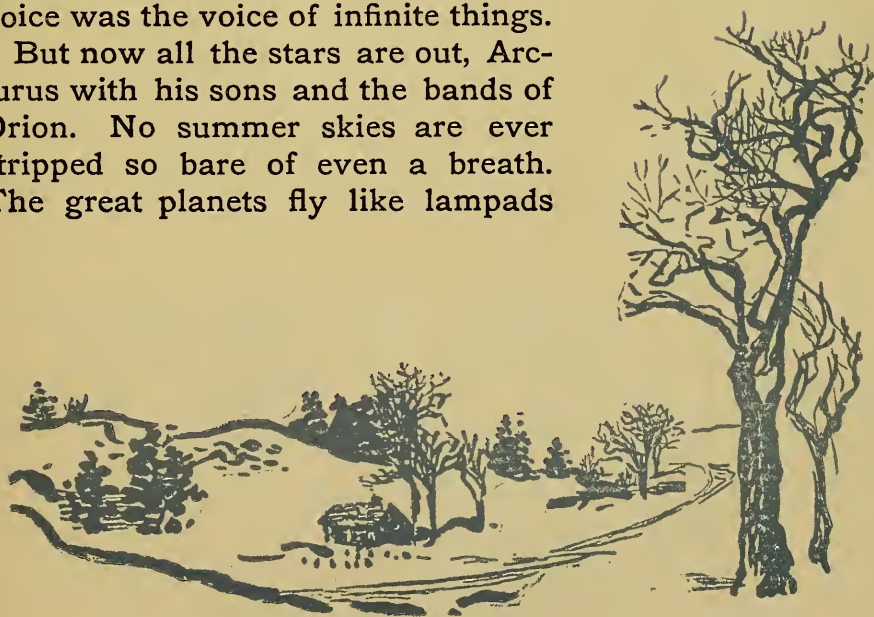
the storm blows up and the snow falls. Each flake gives the cheek a soft and cool caress and its crystal passes in beauty on the hand. Its dance mimics and outdoes the dance of the swarming gnats, while it hangs wreaths of immaterial bloom upon the loftier boughs, and spreads a downy coverlid upon the little roots of the grass beneath. And if the gale grow to tempest it is with the triumphant sensation of overcoming evil that we breast it and defy it. How white and purified is the earth then at last! How spiritual its aspect and horizon! What a winged thing it seems! And we spread our wings with it. As we walk home some night when such a storm has blown away, tired, perhaps, and chilled, it may be depressed with care and full of gloom, even doubting all things, how the last still



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glow of the receding sunset, with its clarity of rich pomegranate tint, drawing away over the snowy fields and their violet shadows, pictures a glowing hearth, invites us like the blaze of a father's fireside, gives us a sense of warmth and joy and cheer, as if we heard a welcoming voice calling us home, assuring us of love and peace. And, as long levels of sea and meadow and vast mountain forms and receding skies affect us like the contemplation of infinity, so when, a shining jewel in the midst of a clear glow, the evening star looks out from illimitable distances we know the welcoming voice was the voice of infinite things.

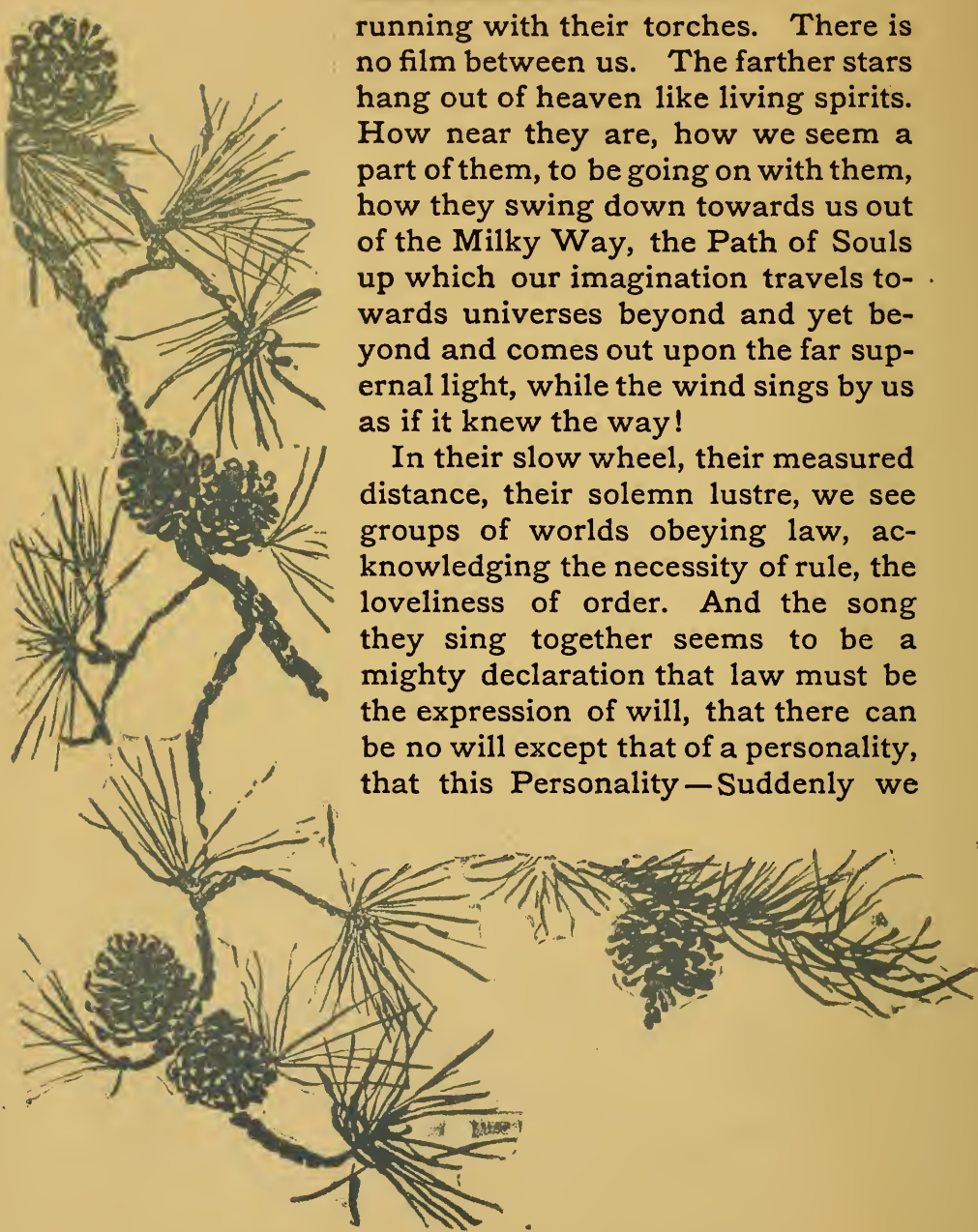
But now all the stars are out, Arc-turus with his sons and the bands of Orion. No summer skies are ever stripped so bare of even a breath. The great planets fly like lampads



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running with their torches. There is no film between us. The farther stars hang out of heaven like living spirits. How near they are, how we seem a part of them, to be going on with them, how they swing down towards us out of the Milky Way, the Path of Souls up which our imagination travels towards universes beyond and yet beyond and comes out upon the far supernal light, while the wind sings by us as if it knew the way!

In their slow wheel, their measured distance, their solemn lustre, we see groups of worlds obeying law, acknowledging the necessity of rule, the loveliness of order. And the song they sing together seems to be a mighty declaration that law must be the expression of will, that there can be no will except that of a personality, that this Personality—Suddenly we



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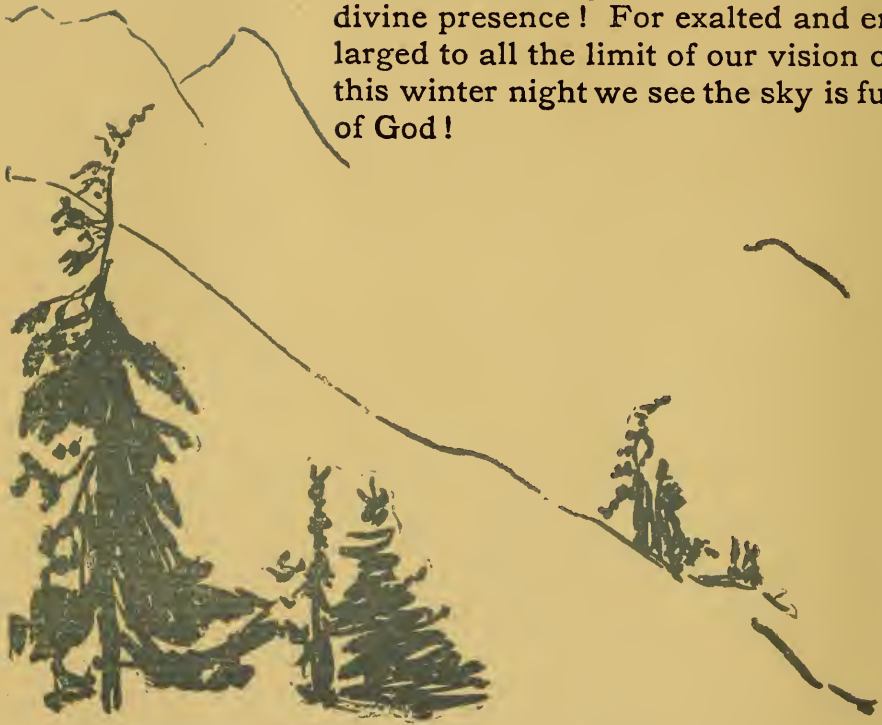
have come close upon God. Yet not to tremble. For although this chief and first of beings must have the chief and first of qualities, and although upward and downward gaze alike give us to see the power; we are left to discover for ourselves that greater than power is love. Life of the germ that all the unfigured cold of outer æther cannot destroy wakes into beautiful growth at a touch of the sun. What more shall we ask for the Divine than Love and Power?

And now the constellations grow paler and the moon sends a glory behind her as she floats up, up, up — so low she rode in summer, so high she rides tonight! In the middle of the highest sky she spreads her wings, while far, far off and faint the luminous nebulae still hang like the reflection of distant palace lights. What



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broad lusters, what sharp shadows on the snow, what reflection into heaven, what height, what depth, what bending of the infinite spaces, what tenderness in the midnight blue, what sense of divine presence ! For exalted and enlarged to all the limit of our vision on this winter night we see the sky is full of God !





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